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WASHINGTON REPORT
by Henry A. Waxman
Congressman, 24th District

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GRAIN SALES TO THE SOVIET UNION NOT WARRANTED

Secretary of Agriculture John Block, expressed his disagreement with the current embargo on the sale of grain to the Soviet Union even before he took office. He candidly told Senate questioners that he thought the time had come for an end to the embargo imposed in the wake of the Soviet military takeover of Afghanistan. I strongly disagree.

It is more important than ever that the United States refuse to sell grain to the Russians. Most of the grain the Soviets want to buy from us would be used as cattle feed. It would be used to combat the massive shortage of meat which is plaguing both the Soviet Union and its Eastern bloc satellites.

The meat shortage caused by a combination of factors including weather problems, an unusually poor harvest, and the U.S. embargo, is the number one domestic problem in the Soviet Union. The men in the Kremlin are working furiously to conceal from the public the fact that Soviet agriculture cannot fill the promises made for it by Soviet leaders.

Why should the United States bail the Soviets out of this painful situation? I cannot think of a single reason. I can think of many reasons to let the Soviets struggle with their problems without our help.

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First of all, the original cause of the embargo -- Soviet occupation of Afghanistan -- has not been solved. The Soviets still occupy that country and are involved in a series of brutal acts of violence to suppress local Afghanistani opposition. It is impossible for outsiders to know just how savage and large-scale Soviet military action in Afghanistan has been.

Second, I am deeply disturbed at the very sharp decline in the number of Jews allowed to leave the Soviet Union in recent months. I was shocked to learn that the upturn in Soviet Jewish emigration recently reported by the United Press International, Associated Press and others has not been confirmed by the Jewish Agency and other informed sources in Vienna. It is possible that the large numbers reported for the past several weeks are merely a Soviet propaganda ploy tied to the current international Congress of Communist Parties. Regardless, the current situation is discouraging. In Odessa, for example, "reunification with relatives" is being interpreted to apply only to the very closest blood kin. Under such restrictions many Soviet Jews who desire to emigrate will never qualify.

Finally, we must not praise the Soviet Union for refraining from an invasion of Poland. Rather, the Soviet Union should be condemned for encircling Poland with hostile Warsaw Pact troops and never missing the opportunity to remind the Poles that they are a captive nation whose slight and fragile independence can be crushed at mere Soviet whim.

None of us want military conflict with the Soviet Union on even a small scale. We are all committed to reducing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States all over the world. Nevertheless, there are global issues at stake of enormous moral and historical significance. The grain embargo and a long-overdue embargo on high technology equipment is the best way of confronting the Soviet Union without risking the peace we cherish.

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